

"IN OTHERS WE TRUST": FINLAND AND NORWAY - HIGH-TRUST SOCIETIES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

During the Covid-19 pandemic, trust has been identified as a key mechanism in pandemic containment. Norway and Finland, two Nordic countries with high trust scores, are cited as best-practice examples. In a qualitative research project on the theoretical construct of caring economics conducted by the author, the deep societal anchoring of trust and integrity has been confirmed in both countries. Based on the empirical example of the Nordic countries, the concept of caring economics emphasizes partnerism and thereby the *real* wealth of nations. *Dugnad/Dugnadsånd*, which refers to collective effort, is a trust-based Norwegian type of commons and commoning that can be regarded as an intersection with caring economics. *Dugnad/Dugnadsånd* integrates the various notions of interpersonal, system, and institutional trust, and thus widely supports mechanisms of pandemic control.

Keywords: Caring Economics; Covid-19 Pandemic; Commons; Commoning; *Dugnad*; *Dugnadsånd*; Trust; Nordic Countries

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INTRODUCTION

In *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (2007), Riane Eisler coins a promising societal concept beyond capitalism and socialism. Based on a feminist orientation and scientific insight from sociology, systems science, and social neuroscience, she developed the concept in contrast to *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith (1937). In contrast to Smith's adopted figure of *homo economicus*, Eisler's concept of caring economics represents the notion of *homo relationis* (Bosworth et al., 2016), and has an empirical correlate in the Nordic countries. Known as "the third way" and exemplifying the social democratic welfare regime in Esping-Andersen's (1993) typology of welfare systems, the Nordic countries not only

function as a model for the caring economics concept, but they are also of interest for research about the commons, defined as “(...) living social systems through which people address their shared problems in self-organized ways” (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019, p. 74). The Norwegian concept of *dugnad* (collective effort), the readiness for corporate and prosocial action, needs to be highlighted in this context. Thereby the Norwegian *dugnadsånd* (sense of a collective effort) builds an intersection between caring economics and a deeply rooted practice in the sense of commoning (Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020).

Dugnad represents an example of common action embedded in the moral concept of the “responsible citizen” functioning as the framework for the Nordic welfare state (Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020). The Nordic democracies and welfare states are based on interpersonal as well as system and institutional trust. As a social process, trust promotes and supports cooperation and is part of all interpersonal interactions. It requires a willingness to be vulnerable, is experience-based, and is acquired early in life. Trust is future-oriented; reliability-oriented; ensures ability to act in uncertain situations; and can be identified by specific behavior (Schipper & Petermann, 2011, p. 246). *Dugnad* in terms of readiness to accept the necessary public health measures, to care for neighbours, etc., can be seen as a commons concerning common mental and physical endeavors for the health of the individual and the health-care system simultaneously.

In the Nordic countries, particularly in Norway, in contrast to the US and many other industrialized nations, the general perception of the state is not antagonistic to the concept of commons, but rather is regarded as part of the state. Thus it was easy for the government and the Prime Minister to incentivize the *dugnadsånd* of pandemic containment by the state and to appeal to the responsible citizenship intrinsic to the moral framework of the country. As both the state and the commons are characterized by trustworthiness, it is not surprising that the Nordic countries were among the most successful nations in 2020 in containing the pandemic (Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020). At the intersection of caring economics and commoning based on trust, solidarity, egalitarianism and a stable democracy, pandemic containment

could be successfully realized. The following definitions outline how trust is embedded in the intersection of caring economics and commoning.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Caring Economics

Riane Eisler focuses on ‘the *real* wealth of nations’ (italics: Hedenigg), advocating for comprehensive gender-equitable economic systems whose starting point and goal lie in sustainable, life-sustaining forms of coexistence and economic activities. Partnership systems of caring economics are characterized by equitable democratic and economic structures, gender equality, mutual respect, and trust, with low levels of violence, and beliefs and narratives that include a high level of appreciation for empathy and concern (Eisler, 2015, p. 8). Social cohesion, cooperation, prosocial behavior, and solidarity form the basis for a social theoretical model underlying the notion of partnerism. In her broad socioeconomic and global ecological approach, Eisler emphasizes the importance of human relationships, particularly the ‘care’ aspect of social relatedness, mindfulness, concern, and caring as fundamental human qualities. Thereby the concept of caring economics was developed in contrast to traditional systems of domination characterized by social and economic inequality, gender inequality, subordination of women and ‘femininity’ to men and ‘masculinity’, and mechanisms of fear based on narratives glorifying violence and dominance (Eisler, 2015, p. 8).

Commons and Commoning

Analogous to caring economics, commons research and activism searches for social and economic societal models apart from capitalism and socialism (Eisler, 2017; Helfrich & Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2014). Bollier and Helfrich (2019) describe commons as “...living social systems through which people address their shared problems in self-organized ways” (p. 74). They state that “a commons arises as people engage in the social practices of COMMONING, participate in PEER GOVERNANCE, and develop collaborative forms of provisioning in the course of using a resource or care-wealth” (p. 74-75). Commons and commoning can philosophically

be described as a “relational ontology” (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019, p. 44), in the same tradition as caring economics and *homo relationis*.

Concerning the position of commons research and activism towards the state, Bollier and Helfrich assert that “the state” is widely perceived as “hostile”; in contrast, they regard the concept of peer governance as a viable solution (p. 121).

***Dugnadsånd*: A Traditional Norwegian Commoning Practice**

The origin of *dugnad* and *dugnadsånd* can be traced to the agrarian society and the rise of social democratic political leadership after World War II, a period that marks the development of the Norwegian welfare model. At present, *dugnad* and *dugnadsånd* are still an integrated part of the welfare model and relevant for the functioning of civil society. Thereby individual rights and collective responsibility build the foundation of the welfare state by “intangible and indispensable trust”: “(...) Norwegians do indeed trust their institutions, their politicians and each other” (Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020, p. 8).

Based on the egalitarian ideal of the Nordic societies, at least two distinct purposes in *dugnad* activities can be discerned: community building, and social control. Failure to participate without a valid excuse is regarded as unacceptable behaviour. “Income equality, trust, and the other factors attributed to Norway’s success emanate from the social control mechanisms” (Wilson & Hessen, 2014, p. 126)

The next section examines the development of the Covid-19 pandemic in detail, focusing on the importance of trust as a central mechanism of pandemic control, as well as on its change in public discourse during the course of the pandemic. Starting from the status in the summer of 2021, we present indicators of successful pandemic control mechanisms based on international comparative studies, especially focusing on the Nordic countries. To aid this discussion, the “Nordic model” is briefly explained.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The model of caring economics is proving to be highly plausible in the current pandemic, and should thus be gaining increasing political significance (Hedenigg, 2021). The example of *dugnadsånd* (*dugnad* as a commoning) seems useful as well in mastering the challenges and tasks of pandemic control with a collective effort.

Generally, the answers to the crisis are to be sought in the pre-existing social structures and crisis management patterns of the respective states, and in this respect, it makes sense to study the indicators of successful countries (Helliwell et al., 2021, p. 28; Min, 2020, p. 4; Bjornskov, 2007). In this context, the cultural or sociological categories of historical, religious, and cultural elements, as well as the institutions (the political, health, social, and educational systems) that have grown from them, are not viewed in opposition to each other, but rather in mutual agreement (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021; Helliwell et al., 2021; Enste & Suling, 2020; Hedenigg, 2021). Welfare regimes and structures of societal cohesion emerge as key elements (OECD, 2021; Greer et al., 2020): perceived and lived social connectedness (Sibley et al., 2020; Matthewman & Huppatz, 2020), perceived and lived solidarity (Pascoe & Stripling, 2020) and the level of trust in a society (Bargain & Aminjonov, 2020; Devine et al., 2020b; Cairney & Wellstead, 2020; Brück et al., 2020; Sibley et al., 2020; Gozgor, 2021; Min, 2020). In summary, these elements can be found in the ‘caring economics’ or ‘caring societies’ of the Nordic countries (Eisler, 2007, 2017).

The Relevance of Trust in Pandemic Containment

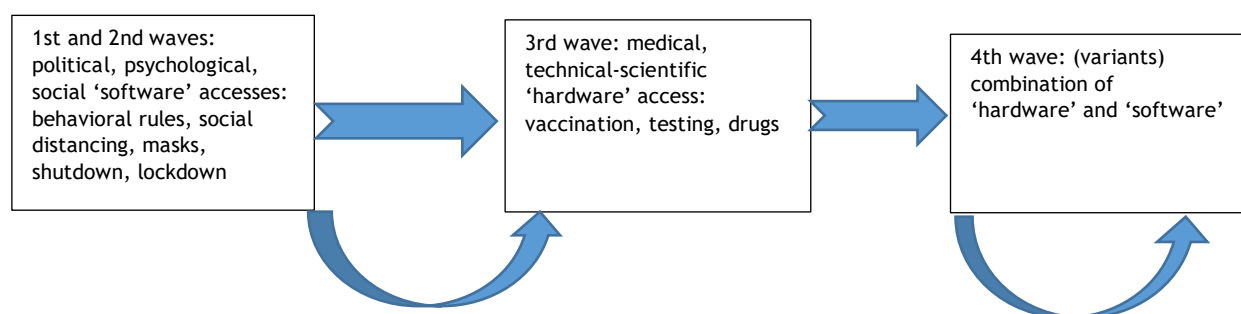
For the author’s country of reference, Germany, declining satisfaction with crisis management during the pandemic indicate declining trust in the government and its institutions (Statista Research Department, 2021). This is troubling because trust emerged as one of the key factors in pandemic containment (Enste & Suling, 2020; Helliwell et al., 2021). In academic, political, and media discourse, the dynamic with which trust has been addressed as a key determinant in the fight against Sars COV-2 shows varying characteristics. For example, discourse focused strongly on social components of interpersonal trust at the beginning of the first wave in March

2020 and during the second wave in October 2020. During the third wave at the beginning of 2021, trust as a dimension of social cohesion increasingly lost its presence in public discourse (Hong et al., 2020). With the availability of vaccines, discussion focused on their effectiveness and safety, hence, trust in science and technology, the ‘hardware’ of pandemic containment. Numerous vulnerabilities in the supply of personal protective equipment and vaccines directed the focus of trust - partly in parallel - towards confidence in systems and institutions and their organizations. Simultaneously, trust became increasingly conspicuous in its absence in organized protests by vaccination opponents and lateral thinkers (like-minded people) (Lobo, 2020; Meyer & Spikschen, 2020).

After the third wave subsided in the spring of 2021, with prospects for a near-normal summer, trust lost its presence in the public discourse. Availability of and access to vaccination - the technological hardware - had supplanted the ‘software’ of trust in terms of social cohesion. Then, with the emergence and spread of the Delta variant, trust is becoming relevant again. Thus, time is a central influencing variable in the dynamic events (Skoda et al., 2021), and limits selective social (and natural) science research results. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Trust during the Course of Covid-19 Waves



Nordic Examples of Pandemic Control

Trust in compliance with the rules of conduct, in the effectiveness of vaccines and their further development, and in political crisis management remains essential. This relationship proved to be particularly significant in those countries that lead in international studies on trust and social cohesion: Over many years, in varying order,

these are the Nordic countries, especially Denmark, Finland, and Norway (OECD, 2017). These countries have also achieved high resilience scores in international comparisons of pandemic containment. Therefore, it seems useful to look at the perception of trust in individual Nordic countries and how it is linked to key mechanisms of management of Covid-19.

A PREVENTABLE GLOBAL DISASTER

The World Health Organization-commissioned Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response concluded after approximately a year and a half of the pandemic that “COVID-19 remains a global disaster. Worse, it was a preventable disaster” (Sirleaf & Clark, 2021). Numerous studies and meta-analyses can identify the mechanisms and decisions in a responsible way.

The 9th World Happiness Report, published in March 2021 (Helliwell et al.), presents comparative data from the past 10 years based on the the Gallup World Poll, the World Risk Poll, and the COVID Data Hub. The report takes two main categories into account: demographic and geographic factors, and social and economic factors. Globally, it seems imperative to take these criteria seriously, apply them to one's own country and government actions, and engage in self-critical analysis and reflection.

Indicators of Successful Pandemic Containment

The editorial on the Public Governance Committee published by the OECD Secretariat in June 2021 confirmed the importance of trust, transparency, and integrity, the foundations of functioning democracies, as the only way to understand, accept, and implement the necessary measures during a pandemic (OECD, 2021, p.6).

The theses specifically stated in the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2021) were supported by the Bloomberg Covid Resilience Ranking (Hong et al., 2020), which was established in November 2020 and is continuously updated, listing those countries in which the pandemic is being managed most effectively.

By March 2021, Bloomberg's ranking (Hong et al.) cited social cohesion as an important factor in pandemic containment, and elaborated: "If you look at Japanese societies or Scandinavian societies, there's very little inequality and a lot of discipline." The 'magic formula' emerging from Bloomberg's ranking is democracy as a form of government (see also Greer et al., 2020) based on trust and compliance, effective communication strategies, high-quality health infrastructure, and social cohesion related to equality in the population. In Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking, Scandinavia had been used as an example until March 2021. Numerous scientific and press publications agree with this assessment (Coronavirus Commission, 2021; Laasko, 2020; Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2021; Stang, 2021; Ursin et al., 2020; Anwar, 2021; Christensen & Laergred, 2020; Raskopf, 2020; Handelszeitung, 2021; Fokus, 2021).

The Nordic Model

The Nordic countries have served as a benchmark in various contexts for decades and are a desirable best practice horizon (Eisler, 2007). Their specific welfare state orientation became known as the 'Nordic model' (Witoszek & Midtun, 2018; Maass, 2015). However, especially since the influx of refugees in 2015-16 and the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been increasing disparity in policy and strategies (Hagelund, 2020; Yarmol-Matusiak et al., 2021; Franssen, 2020). Nevertheless, the Nordic model can still serve as a fundamental orientation: historically, beyond capitalism and socialism, it describes a distinct third way of social, economic, and sociopolitical structuring (Lundberg, 2014, p. 95). In the context of the pandemic, high levels of trust, a stable understanding of democracy and solidarity, and low corruption statistics are of particular interest. These constitutive elements are manifested in the sociopolitical profile of the Nordic countries as tax-financed welfare states with universal rights, high rates of female employment, and gender equality. Characteristic features include in particular a pronounced social partnership with strong trade union involvement, "with collective bargaining regulations given precedence over statutory regulations, and a dual tax system (high individual income taxation and low capital taxation)" (Maass, 2015, pp. 1-2). In general, the Nordic countries are said to have a high degree of plasticity (Lundberg, 2014, p. 101) and a pronounced pragmatism. This may also have

contributed to the successful management of multiple historical changes and appears to be a successful strategy in the COVID-19 pandemic (Laakso, 2021).

Nevertheless, the Nordic welfare states are confronted with the same profound challenges as other industrialized nations. Despite the state's main financial involvement in social services even today, there is a general tendency for the state to retreat. Private enterprise and competition are pushing back the formerly pronounced statehood, especially at the municipal level, and neoliberalism is seen as a threat to the open societies and economies of the North (Alestalo et al., 2014, p. 128; see also Witoszek & Midtun, 2018).

The reference to the Nordic countries in Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking stressed specific forms of social cohesion in addition to structural elements of state forms and institutions. Universalism, equality, and equity were emphasized, with the consequence of comparatively low inequality and strongly developed discipline. From this was derived a more coherent response across countries and the rationale for successful pandemic containment to date (Strang, 2020; Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020; Christensen & Laegreid, 2020; Höppner, 2020; Laasko, 2020 Skoda et al., 2021; Handelszeitung, 04.01.21; Fokus, 23.01.21).

The following section provides a theoretical outline of the concept of trust and presents selected results of the qualitative pilot study on trust based on interviews in Norway and Finland. The interviews are followed by an overview of the assessment of trust in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Finland and Norway based on international studies and investigative commissions, respectively.

CARING ECONOMICS: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN NORWAY, SWEDEN, AND FINLAND

The question to what extent the desirable Nordic models of society - from a US perspective - could also be seen as a best practice model in the European context, specifically in the German context, was the motivation for a pilot project conducted in 2015 and 2016 with 20 scholars in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Hedenigg, 2019).

Overall, the research confirmed the cornerstones of the model and emphasized the importance of cooperation and trust in the Nordic countries (Hedenigg, 2021). As detailed descriptions may be helpful for an understanding of the substantive, emotional, and moral-ethical dimensions of trust in the Nordic countries, the next section includes some key features. First, however, it is useful to discuss trust in terms of its psychological, sociological, and behavioral economic perspectives, as well as policy implications.

The Concept of Trust

Trust can be regarded as a proximate mechanism of cultural evolution (Hedenigg, 2021; Bothworth et al., 2016). From a psychological perspective, trust is multidimensional and includes affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements (Kassebaum, 2004, p. 13). In addition to the psychological dimension, the sociological, political, and behavioral-economic significance of trust are increasingly coming into focus (Acedo-Carmona & Gomila, 2014; Bergh & Bjørnskov, 2011, 2014; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, & Rand, 2016; Rothstein, 2013; Zak & Knack, 2015; Zak & Kugler, 2011; Sønderskov & Dinesen, 2016; Ostrom & Walker, 2005). Sociologically, there is a distinction between personal trust and system trust, which has become indispensable for coping with the increasing complexity of the present. Sociologist and systems theorist Niklas Luhmann interprets the problem of trust as a "problem of risky advance payment" in the horizon of uncertain future perspectives (Luhmann, 2017, p. 27-28). In this context, the necessity of trust is linked to the freedom of action of others. At the individual level, trust exhibits the peculiarities of being something internal or internally grounded (*Innenfundierung*). Inner security replaces outer security and increases tolerance for uncertainty (Luhmann, 2017, p.30).

In relation to the pandemic, the individual and the system are dependent on trust, both in terms of system elements of health care and economics and in terms of the behavior of individual others. However, in view of the complexity and demands placed on individuals and systems alike, parallel mechanisms of control seem to be needed. Agreed-upon rules must be observed, to complement the internal foundation of security with the external security of system mechanisms of control and, if necessary, sanctions. Thus trust is accompanied by numerous supporting

mechanisms of learning, symbolizing, controlling, and sanctioning (Luhmann, 2017, p. 103).

Another important theoretical distinction should be made between the concepts of 'mistrust' and 'distrust'. (See also Allmendinger & Wetzel, 2020, p. 56-58). According to Devine et al., (2020a), mistrust implies attentive and critical appraisal of the qualitative work of public institutions. Distrust, however, is based on biases disconnected from actual performance, with expectations of betrayal (Thomson & Brandenburg, 2019, p. 12). Mistrust can serve a constructive control function by informed citizens, while distrust has inherent "biases, echo chamber effects, and emotional aspects" that are difficult to access for political action (OECD, 2021, p. 21).

In addition to the psychological and sociological position, research in social neuroscience and behavioral economics, with their multidisciplinary methodological approaches, provide in-depth insights into the modulating factors of trust. Considering current pandemic events, conspiracy theories, disregard for public health regulations, and increasingly aggressive behavior among the population, studies examining mechanisms of action of testosterone on trust formation are instructive. Generally, a stronger effect of distrust compared to trust can be explained in part by the nature of distrust, which is more emotional than trust (Petermann 2013); emotions are more salient and accessible and can be more easily retrieved (Luhmann, 2017).

In the face of pandemic events, trust in public policy is of paramount importance. Cairney and Wellstead (2020) specify relationships of trust in the political context: "During a pandemic, people need to trust *experts* to help them understand and respond to the problem, *governments* to coordinate policy instruments and make choices about levels of coercion, and *citizens* as they cooperate to minimize infection" (Cairney & Wellstead, 2020, p. 1; italics Cairney & Wellstead).

For a deeper understanding of the drivers of trust levels and how public policy could strengthen trust, it is necessary to comprehend the determinants of institutional

trust. Trust as a competency describes performance and quality in the provision of public goods and services. Responsiveness in terms of availability, access, punctuality, and quality of public services represents a key dimension of trustworthiness. Furthermore, reliability as “the ability of government institutions to respond effectively to assigned responsibilities, anticipate needs and thereby minimize uncertainties in people’s economic, social and political environment” (OECD, 2021, p.23) is considered the second essential dimension of trustworthiness (OECD, 2021, pp. 23-24).

Perceptions of Trust in Norway and Finland

Based on these basic definitions of trust and its importance in public policy, the following section presents excerpts from interviews with scholars in Norway and Finland who participated in the caring economics project. The Swedish Covid-19 strategy did not play a prominent role in international comparison in the control of the pandemic and is not included for this reason.

In Norway, the high level of interpersonal trust was particularly emphasized by interviewees. The emergence of trust was described as historical and as a prerequisite for the willingness to pay high taxes. Accordingly, it is central for the welfare state to be able to trust people. Trust was described as essential for economic growth in the Nordic countries due to low costs of transition of control mechanisms.

Trust researcher Helge Skirbekk emphasized the all-embracing importance of trust in Norwegian society in reference to the American expression ‘In God we trust’: “In the US they have a ‘national slogan’” ...: it’s ‘In God we trust’. What would it be in Norway? I said, ‘In others we trust’”. In line with other researchers, Skirbekk associated personal trust with willingness to pay taxes and the welfare system financed by them. Low corruption rates are considered a prerequisite: “This is important for the welfare state. Because you wouldn’t be willing to pay taxes for people you don’t know if you don’t trust.” (H. Skirbekk, personal communication, 10.05.2015)

Economist and tax expert Karine Nyborg made a similar point. "Trust is something that is really pervasive to the Norwegian society, you find it at all levels. In all kinds of interactions. Even in the marketplace. When people trust each other in the markets, it's easy to trade things, because you don't need to check and control everything. So, it's very efficient, even if somebody is going to trick you every now and then. So, in a society where most people are reliable, trust is very - it pays." (K. Nyborg, personal communication, 20.04.2016)

Norwegian sociologist Tone Poulsson Torgersen described trust as a central value orientation and referred to the prevalence of trust in the population as social capital: "What makes maybe the Norwegian population different from other populations ..., one of the things that comes up first, is the trust. The proportion of trust in the population, the social capital." There are various sociological approaches and perspectives regarding social capital, with Torgersen advocating for the institution-based position: "If you have a long tradition of democracy, if you have a long tradition of social policies, universal policies, and transparency in organizations, you prove that you can trust the police officers, you can to a certain extent trust the politicians, then you build this social capital."

Nevertheless, she saw a similar threat to confidence in Norway as already seen in Sweden with its austerity policy. "If they [Sweden] increase inequalities and they partly privatized some of their work insurance schemes, and if this process continues, the austerity policies, I think that's going to influence trust. So, in the short run it looks like a rescue plan for national economists, that I think in the long term, it may erode social cohesion and trust. ... We [Norway] haven't had the same, but of course, in many, many policy areas we have had changes in a more individualistic way. ... When you introduce these kinds of mechanisms, I think it changes the whole mindset in the population. And it will be more individualistically-oriented and drain out the trust in the population." (T. P. Torgersen, personal communication, 10.05.2016)

In Finland, based on social value orientation, social psychologist Klaus Helkama highlighted honesty as the central value - both as an abstract value and as a norm

in daily life and in empirical test results: “As a matter of fact, in those Protestant countries, the majority thinks that other people can be trusted. In the rest of Europe, the starting point is that other people cannot be trusted.” Although Helkama noted a strong correlation between personal and institutional trust, he emphasized the importance of personal trust in economic and international comparisons: “Interpersonal trust and trust in institutions correlate very highly. But one of the surprising findings ... during my whole career was, that interpersonal trust explained the economic competitiveness, which was measured by purely macro-economic indexes.” (K. Helkama, personal communication, 11.05.2016).

Finnish physician Arja Harila-Saari, who lives and works in Sweden, compared the two countries and emphasized the strong normative orientation behind the trust and integrity construct in Finland. “It’s a matter of honor. You’d rather pay your taxes and feel that you are honest, and you are taking part and you are doing the right, rather than us the black labor or not ask for the receipt. Of course, there are people who do it, but in general.” This attitude is expected from a citizen of Nordic societies. Thus, abuse of the system leads to strong annoyance and irritation: “Because when you live in this Nordic society, you kind of expect that people think this way. ... You have to trust that people are doing, all are doing the same, because then you are also willing to do it. Furthermore, she emphasizes the stigmatizing, sanctioning response to breach of trust and (tax) fraud: “And then you see that someone is not paying the taxes or using the system in their benefit. Of course, it’s stigmatizing that you are not a good citizen, but it also irritates people very much. Because you have to keep the trust.” (A. Harila-Saari, personal communication, 11.05.2016).

TRUST AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN FINLAND AND NORWAY

Finland

According to an OECD analysis (2021a, p.10), the rule of law, a performance-based system, and a value-based approach to integrity together form the foundation for the functioning of public institutions in Finland. However, the high trust scores apply to the Nordic countries and the Nordic model in general: thus, public officials were

seen as playing a key role in building and defining trust relationships, and generalized trust is derived from this. Based on data from the Eurobarometer, the OECD report (2021a) pointed out that trust in public services is higher than trust in government.

According to the OECD study "Drivers of Trust in Public institutions in Finland" (2021a), with its special focus on the Covid-19 pandemic, containment management was rated as good overall: "The Finnish administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been praised as one of the best in Europe. Finland flattened the COVID-19 infection curve faster than many OECD countries and has kept the infection rate low, thanks to its swift and well-targeted policy response." The fast and effective responsive of central public services and the deepening of existing internet service, which made remote working and schooling trouble-free, were highlighted. Students who needed them were provided with computers or tablets, and care for older adults and people with disabilities was adapted. Finland is one of the OECD countries where the use of tracing apps is most widespread (OECD, 2021a, p. 31). The government's open, transparent, and collaborative communication, as well as its evidence-based approach, focus on different target groups, and communication in different languages and diverse media were also evaluated positively. The recommendations of the OECD study focus on the following issues: "1) improving measurement of trust in government; 2) strengthening responsiveness in service design and delivery; 3) improving reliability for a more inclusive policy making; 4) improving openness to strengthen political efficacy and participation; 5) supporting integrity to promote trust over compliance-oriented control; 6) ensuring fairness and non-discrimination" (OECD, 2021a, p.10 -11).

Norway

Even though no external international organization investigated Coronavirus management in Norway as in Finland (OECD, 2021a), the independent government Coronavirus Commission report published in spring 2021 shows parallels to Finland in many respects. It came to a generally similarly positive assessment, although criticism was expressed particularly about the lack of preparation for a pandemic and conceivable further crisis. Emphasis was placed on the fact that, at the time of

the study, Norway's restrictions were more far-reaching than those required by international standards, and Norway had "one of the lowest mortality rates among Western countries and a relatively modest decline in economic output" (Coronavirus Commission, 2021, p. 23). Factors that favored resilience in Norwegian society included solidarity and trust in the society. This was expressed by Prime Minister Erna Solberg in a television speech on 18.03.2020: "When freedom has come under threat, Norwegians have given their all for one another. This has given the country an advantage more powerful than any weapon, and more valuable than any petroleum fund: our confidence and trust in one another" (Coronavirus Commission, 2021, p.22). Solberg also appealed to *dugnadsånd*: "It is therefore absolutely vital that each citizen participates in a *dugnad* to slow the virus down" (Nilsen & Skarpenes, 2020). Nilsen and Skarpenes (2020) interpreted this as an appeal to "the people's sense of a collective effort (*dugnadsånd*), thus invoking a mindset that put the interests of the community before those of the individual" (p. 2), expressing a strong commoning attitude.

Like the OECD report on Finland, the Norwegian Coronavirus Commission also emphasized the importance of the Nordic model as a foundation for pandemic containment. It highlighted the comprehensive welfare system, especially the provision of full sick pay that enabled most employees to implement the recommended measures of home-based quarantine at no personal cost (Coronavirus Commission, 2021, p.23-24). The strength of existing internet access during the pandemic was also emphasized. As early as March 2020, about half of all employees in Norway were working remotely. This was predicated on widely available household broadband connection, which in 2018 comprised about 80 percent of Norwegian households. Because a large proportion of work activities were performed from home, most economic activities could continue while complying with infection control measures. Similarly, teaching in schools and universities could be done digitally (Coronavirus Commission, 2021, p.24).

LESSONS LEARNED

Trust can be measured, even if methodologies of individual aspects of international comparative studies can be criticized. What is more important, however, is the fact that trust can be operationalized. That it can be described, studied, and practically learned and applied along psychological, sociological, behavioral-economic, and political criteria and dimensions. The importance of trust, evident in the excerpts from the Nordic interviewees, attests to the deep rootedness of trust and integrity in Nordic societies. These are not intangible myths, but institutional qualities based on deeply held values, and on citizens' identification with them. If trust has the status in society that it proved to have during the Covid-19 pandemic, the formation and development of trust at all levels of society - interpersonal, system, and institutional - is of primary societal relevance. Germany has some catching up to do in this regard. The pandemic shows in its dynamics that trust is not a temporary 'goodie' of the 'soft' social aspects of social coexistence. The importance of trust in institutions and the hardware they develop and represent in the form of personal protective equipment, vaccines, and medicines is illustrated by the social problem of vaccination opponents and lateral thinkers. If these people are unable to (re)gain their trust in society and institutions, pandemic control measures will fail in the long term, with all the personal, social, and (national) economic consequences. Both the frameworks of caring economics and of commons research and activism offer a variety of analytical perspectives and creative solutions to enhance trust building and thus ways for pandemic control. The examples of the Nordic countries prove that caring economics and commons/commoning are interwoven and complement one another. The suggestions in this article are not presented as a blueprint, but as inspiring examples for further solution finding.

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